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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Seventeenth session
26-30 July 1999

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON A PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Information received from indigenous organizations

1. In its resolution 1999/52, the Commission on Human Rights decided to re-establish the open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group to meet for eight working days prior to its fifty-sixth session with a view to submitting one or more proposals on the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people to the Commission at its next session in March/April 2000. The second session of the ad hoc working group is scheduled to meet in Geneva from 7 to 16 February 2000. In the same resolution, the Commission urged the Working Group on Indigenous Populations to consider the issue further and to comment on the report of the ad hoc working group (E/CN.4/1999/83) so that the views expressed could be circulated prior to the next session of the ad hoc working group.

2. The present document contains information relating to the proposed permanent forum for indigenous people received from an indigenous organization.

RUSSIAN ASSOCIATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE NORTH (RAIPON)

[14 April 1999]
[Original: RUSSIAN]

Resolution of the coordinating council of the Association of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation (RAIPON) on the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system

Moscow, 19 March 1999

We, the plenipotentiary representatives of the small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation, having met on 19 March 1999 in Moscow, Russian Federation,

Taking into account the results of the first session of the open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group established in accordance with resolution 1998/20 of the Commission on Human Rights dated 9 April 1998;

Highly appreciative of the results of five days' work by the working group at its first session and the personal contribution of its Chairman, Mr. Richard van Rijssen, thanks to whose efforts substantial progress was made on the question of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system;

Welcoming the position adopted by many Governments in expressing unconditional support for the idea of the early establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people;

Supporting the declarations made by indigenous peoples and the resolutions and statements of the United Nations concerning the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system, including:

Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations, in which the Organization proclaims the development of friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination, and the taking of other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace, as being among its purposes;

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights (A/CONF.157/23), which refers to the need to consider the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system;

United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/157, in which the establishment of a permanent forum in the United Nations system is defined as one of the main objectives of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People;

The Secretary-General's review of the existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations concerning indigenous peoples,

which contains the conclusion that in the United Nations system there are virtually no mechanisms which give indigenous peoples an opportunity to take part in the decision-making and that there are no regular exchanges of information between Governments, indigenous peoples and the United Nations system;

The reports of the first and second workshops on a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system held in Copenhagen, Denmark (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/7) and Santiago, Chile (E/CN.4/1998/11);

The declarations by the international conferences of indigenous peoples on a permanent forum in the United Nations system held at Temuco, Chile (cf. E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.1), Kuna-Yala, Panama (cf. E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.3) and Indore, India, and by the Conference of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic Region held at Geneva, Switzerland (cf. E/CN.4/AC.47/1999/4), and the decisions and resolutions of organizations of indigenous peoples aimed at the establishment of a permanent forum;

call for the early establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples in the United Nations system.

Mandate

The permanent forum's mandate should guarantee it full powers to give effective consideration to the entire range of issues covered by the mandate of the Economic and Social Council in relation to indigenous peoples.

Besides coordinating activities relating to indigenous peoples in the United Nations system, providing methodological and advisory assistance to States, specialized agencies and other interested parties, drafting recommendations on issues affecting indigenous peoples and disseminating information on indigenous peoples, the permanent forum should, in RAIPON's view, have the right to adopt decisions and take steps aimed at the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, including steps towards the settlement of disputes affecting indigenous peoples.

The permanent forum should have the right, where necessary, to turn to experts and ad hoc working groups in specific areas, and to establish such working groups.

Status

The permanent forum should be established as an independent functional commission of the Economic and Social Council.

Membership and participants

The permanent forum should have at least 20 members appointed by the Economic and Social Council, including equal numbers of representatives of indigenous peoples and of Member States of the United Nations, all members having full voting rights and serving on an equal footing.

Indigenous peoples should be represented in the permanent forum with due regard for the principle of balanced geographical distribution, which differs substantially from the principle of division into five geopolitical regions adopted in the United Nations. RAIPON considers that the principle of representation of the main language groups of indigenous peoples (Spanish, English, French, Russian, Arabic and others) must be maintained in the permanent forum.

The members of the permanent forum representing indigenous peoples should be elected by the indigenous peoples themselves at conferences and forums in the respective regions, after which their candidatures should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council. Indigenous peoples should have the right to rotate their representatives after the expiry of their mandates and on other objective grounds.

Indigenous peoples and their organizations, Member States of the United Nations, specialized agencies of the United Nations, experts and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations may participate in the work of the permanent forum as observers without any restrictions whatever.

Headquarters

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at Geneva.

(Many specialized agencies and United Nations departments are based in Geneva; travel costs for indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation would be lower.)

Term of office of members of the permanent forum

Four years with the possibility of reappointment for a further term.

Finance

The permanent forum and any subsidiary bodies it may create should be financed out of the regular budget of the United Nations.

Secretariat

A new secretariat should be set up for the permanent forum. It should be financed out of the regular budget of the United Nations. The secretariat should be headed and staffed by qualified representatives of indigenous peoples.

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